



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

December 30, 2010

The Honorable Wally Herger
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Herger:

Thank you for your letter regarding the processing of notices of disagreement (NOD) by the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Oakland. I appreciate your bringing your concerns to our attention.

The Director of the Oakland Regional Office has assured me that no decision was made to stop processing NODs. However, over the last year a number of specialists from Oakland's appeals processing team were out on extended medical leave, which caused NOD processing to decline. Additionally, members of the appeals team were temporarily assigned to assist in processing the large influx of claims from Vietnam Veterans for disabilities recently determined to result from exposure to Agent Orange. Throughout this period, the regional office continued to process NODs, although at a reduced level.

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has taken action to increase the staffing level assigned to the Oakland Regional Office's appeals team. VBA leadership will continue to closely monitor the situation to ensure improvement.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Thank you for your continuing support of our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Eric K. Shinseki", is positioned above the printed name.

Eric K. Shinseki